

A Message of Comfort During the Storm

It was bad enough that Pastor Steve McKnight and his wife, Teresa, lost both their house and their church when Hurricane Katrina slammed into New Orleans 12 years ago. Last weekend they had to evacuate their house again—this time in Corpus Christi, Texas—because Hurricane Harvey was headed straight toward them.

This time, thankfully, the damage to their home in Texas was minimal. And this time their church, Gateway Christian Center, is functioning as a relief center for storm victims.

Today, McKnight has a message for all those along the Gulf Coast who are going through this 2017 disaster.

“We lost everything but the clothes on our backs in 2005, but He has restored everything,” McKnight told me yesterday, shortly after power was restored to his home. “Teresa and I are still standing. Today we are still serving the Lord. We have each other, and we have an awesome son who loves the Lord. We are so blessed.”

Hurricane Katrina was a nightmare for the McKnights. After they evacuated New Orleans, their home was submerged in several feet of water. Their church, River of Life Worship Center, was totally destroyed—and it was not insured. Nothing in their home was salvageable, including a room full of diapers and baby presents that had just been given to Teresa, who was nearing her due date.

The McKnights’ son, Isaac, was born just days later. The couple moved temporarily into an office at a church in Birmingham, Alabama. A few days later, a wealthy Christian family from the Atlanta area offered to house them in a fully furnished, four-bedroom home. Other blessings began to pour

in.

Eventually the McKnights got back on their feet and began pastoring again in Alabama, then in their native Louisiana and eventually in Texas.

The temporal things they lost in the storm were eventually replaced. Their frayed nerves were calmed. Their peace was restored. And their faith grew stronger.

One thing that carried the McKnights through that 2005 disaster was a song that became wildly popular that year. It was the Casting Crowns hit “I Will Praise You Through This Storm.” The chorus says this:

*But as the thunder rolls / I barely hear You whisper through
the rain /*

“I’m with you” / And as Your mercy falls /

I raise my hands and praise the God who gives and takes away.

While the McKnights are grateful that the eye of Hurricane Harvey didn’t pass over Corpus Christi as was expected, they are concerned about the families in coastal Texas who lost their homes, and for the estimated 30,000 people who have moved to temporary shelters because of the floods in Houston.

“We pray for those who are going through this,” says Steve. “I know what they are going through. I felt the most helpless I have ever felt in my life after Katrina. But I also know the Lord brought us through that storm. He can do the same for those affected by Hurricane Harvey.”

Steve said when he and his wife were going through the shock of losing everything to Katrina, they found genuine comfort from the Holy Spirit’s presence. “We learned the value of spending time praising Him every day, no matter what is happening. We learned the value of praying in the Holy

Spirit.”

When Hurricane Harvey was headed for Texas last week, Teresa couldn't believe this was happening again. She immediately prepared to evacuate because she didn't want to live through another disaster. But she found comfort in the fact that the name of her city, Corpus Christi, means “body of Christ.” She knew she could hide in Jesus and find safety.

Says Steve: “We try to spiritualize everything so much that we miss the simplicity of the message of the gospel. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter. Second Corinthians 1:3 says God is ‘the God of all comfort.’ He comforts us in all of our tribulations. We need to rely on Him and trust Him.”

As they reach out to the storm victims around them in south Texas, the McKnights are still humming that song from 2005. And they invite those affected by Hurricane Harvey to sing these words written by Mark Hall and Bernie Herms:

*And I'll praise You in this storm / And I will lift my hands
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For You are who You are / No matter where I am /

And every tear I've cried / You hold in Your hand /

You never left my side / And though my heart is torn /

I will praise You in this storm.